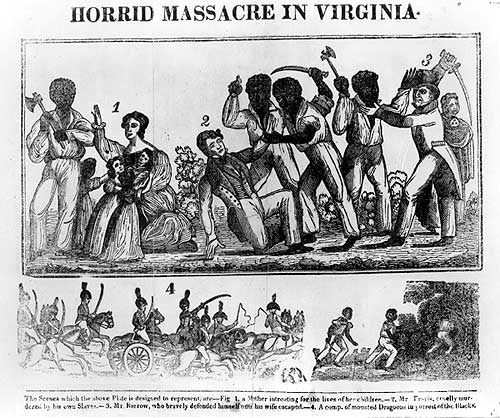
**The Nat Turner rebellion.**

In 1831 a slave named Nat Turner led a rebellion in Southhampton County, Virginia. A religious leader and self-styled Baptist minister, Turner and a group of followers killed some sixty white men, women, and children on the night of August 21. Turner and 16 of his conspirators were captured and executed, but the incident continued to haunt Southern whites. Blacks were randomly killed all over Southhampton County; many were beheaded and their heads left along the roads to warn others. In the wake of the uprising planters tightened their grip on slaves and slavery. This woodcut was published in an 1831 account of the slave uprising.



Source: Samuel Warner, *Authentic and impartial narrative of the tragical scene which was witnessed in Southampton County (Virginia) . . .* (New York, 1831)—Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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| **Questions:**   1. **Describe the events of the Nat Turner rebellion, as they are depicted in the wood cut.** 2. **How are the whites depicted in the woodcut? How are the slaves depicted in the wood cut?** 3. **Who do you think made this woodcut? Who do you think was intended to see the wood cut?** |

**Negro Spirituals**

In the early nineteenth century, African Americans were involved in the “Second Awakening”. They met in camp meetings and sang without any hymnbook. Spontaneous songs were composed on the spot. They were called “spiritual songs” and the term “sperichil” (spiritual) appeared for the first time in the book “Slave Songs of The United States” (by Allen, Ware, Garrison, 1867).

As negro spirituals are Christian songs, most of them concern what the Bible says and how to live with the Spirit of God. For example, the “dark days of bondage” were enlightened by the hope and faith that God will not leave slaves alone.

By the way, African Americans used to sing outside of churches. During slavery and afterwards, slaves and workers who were working at fields or elsewhere outdoors, were allowed to sing “work songs”. This was the case, when they had to coordinate their efforts for hauling a fallen tree or any heavy load. Even prisoners used to sing “chain gang” songs when they worked on the road or on some construction project.

SWING LOW SWEET CHARIOT

**Lead**: *Swing low, sweet chariot***Chorus**: *Coming for to carry me home***Lead**: *Swing low, sweet chariot***Chorus**: *Coming for to carry me home***Lead**: *If you get there before I do***Chorus**: *Coming for to carry me home***Lead**: *Tell all my friends, I’m coming too***Chorus**: *Coming for to carry me home*

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| **Questions:**   1. **What is a chariot?** 2. **The chorus says, “Coming for to carry me home”. What do you think “home” means?** 3. **Describe the tune of the song. Is it joyful? Sad?** 4. **Why do you think that slaves sang songs like this one?** 5. **What does a song like this one communicate about slaves’ beliefs in God?** |

**An Excerpt from the writings of Frederick Douglass:**

COWARDICE DEPARTED, BOLD DEFIANCE TOOK ITS PLACE"

In this selection, Frederick Douglass describes his battles with a "Negro- breaker."

If at any one time of my life more than another, I was made to drink the bitterest dregs of slavery, that time was during the first six months of my stay with Mr. [Edward] Covey. We were worked in all weathers. It was never too hot or too cold; it could never rain, blow, hail, or snow too hard for us to work in the field. Work, work, work was scarcely more the order of the day than of the night. The longest days were too short for him, and the shortest nights too long for him. I was somewhat unmanageable when I first went there, but a few months of this discipline tamed me. Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute!

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| **Questions:**   1. **Douglass writes, “the longest days were too short for him, and the shortest nights too long for him.” Explain what he means by this.** 2. **Why did slave owners send slaves to slave breakers?** 3. **Describe the impact that the “negro-breaker” had on Frederick Douglass.** 4. **How might Frederick Douglass act in the future, now that he has been broken by Mr. Covey?** |

**From the writings of a doctor on a plantation:**

[James Ramsay](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/REramsay.htm), a doctor working for several sugar plantations in [St Kitts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Kitts), was shocked by the way the slaves were treated by the overseers. Ramsay later recalled in his book, [Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies](http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=ntt_athr_dp_sr_1?_encoding=UTF8&search-alias=books-uk&field-author=Richard%20Reddie#/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias=stripbooks&field-keywords=Essay+on+the+Treatment+and+Conversion+of+African+Slaves+in+the+British+Sugar+Colonies&rh=n%3A266239,k%3AEssay+on+the+Treatment+and+Conversion+of+African+Slaves+in+the+British+Sugar+Colonies) (1784): "The ordinary punishments of slaves, for the common crimes of neglect, absence from work, eating the sugar cane, theft, are cart whipping, beating with a stick, sometimes to the breaking of bones, the chain, an iron crook about the neck... a ring about the ankle, and confinement in the dungeon. There have been instances of slitting of ears, breaking of limbs, so as to make amputation necessary, beating out of eyes, and castration... In short, in the place of decency, sympathy, morality,and religion; slavery produces cruelty and oppression. It is true, that the unfeeling application of the ordinary punishments ruins the constitution, and shortens the life of many a poor wretch."

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| **Questions:**   1. **What were actions that slaves were punished for?** 2. **How were slaves punished for their actions? (Name at least five ways)** 3. **Which punishment do you think is the least severe? The most severe?** |



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| **Questions:**   1. **Describe all of the jobs that slaves might complete on a plantation.** 2. **What was a plantation? What crops were usually harvested on a plantation?** 3. **This plantation was in Mississippi. Many other plantations existed in the South. In the North, however, there was less wide open land and more cities. Where do you think most people worked in the North?** |